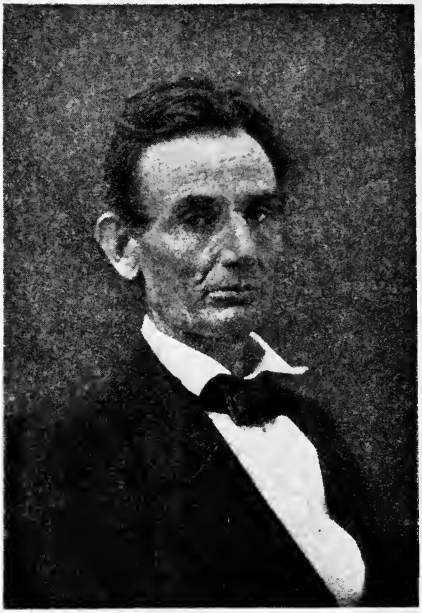
Recollections of Lincoln and Douglas Forty Years Ago

200 copies, privately printed for presentation to friends

RECOLLECTIONS OF LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS FORTY YEARS AGO

I have refrained from connecting my name with this work, as I have no desire to be known as an author. But it gives me much pleasure to present it, with my kindest regards.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS

FORTY YEARS AGO

BY

AN EYEWITNESS

NEW YORK
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Dedication

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE WORK

TO THE

PIONEERS OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

MY LOT WAS CAST AMONG THEM IN THOSE DAYS,
WHEN I WITNESSED THEIR EARNEST
LABORS AND GREAT ENDEAVORS

TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF HUMAN LIBERTY

PREFACE.

In presenting the Recollections given in this little book, I commend them to the reader, knowing full well that there may be some errors. What I have written is entirely from memory. Residing in Chicago in the years of the exciting events which led up to the Civil War, I took a deep interest in the political situation at that time, and was an eye-witness of many events related here.

We are seeing now that Mr. Lincoln's life has been undergoing a constant development ever since his death, which will never cease as long as God reigns.

THE AUTHOR.

STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS

RECOLLECTIONS OF LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS FORTY YEARS AGO.

ON the evening of the 9th of July, 1858, there occurred in the city of Chicago one of the greatest demonstrations that had ever been witnessed there. Bands were playing, cannons were booming, flags flying, and general good feeling prevailed. But why this great jubilee?

Chicago was to welcome on that occasion Senator Douglas, who had represented the State of Illinois twelve years in the United States Senate, and who was returning that evening to ask an election from his constituents for a third term.

On his arrival at the railway station he was received with great honors, and on the way to his hotel stood in an open carriage, hat in hand, and graciously received the plaudits of the multitude along the route of the procession, and responded with that courtesy for which he was always noted.

When he reached the Tremont House, his headquarters in Chicago,

he immediately appeared on the balcony used for a speaker's stand, and Stephen Arnold Douglas opened a political campaign that evening which proved to be fraught with more interest to the whole civilized world than any before or since.

Mr. Douglas had recently left Washington, and the sessions of the Senate which had just adjourned had been one stormy and angry debate between the supporters of the Administration and Mr. Douglas. He had placed himself boldly in antagonism against President Buchanan in his speeches on the Lecompton Constitution, which was soon to create out of a Territory

the free State of Kansas. Every prominent office-holder in the city of Chicago known to be a Douglas Democrat was removed. One of his warmest friends, whom Senator Douglas had caused to be appointed Postmaster of Chicago, was retired and succeeded by one of his bitterest enemies.

Mr. Douglas, in his contest with the Administration, had the sympathy and support, not only of the Democrats of Illinois, but prominent Republicans, including Horace Greeley of the New York *Tribune*, who advocated and advised the Republicans of Illinois, under the existing circumstances, to accept

Judge Douglas as their candidate for United States Senator; but the strongest and best element of the Republican party of the State said "No!" They knew the "Little Giant" in former years, when he had played his political games, which had never redounded in any good to the Republican party. And never did the Judge mean they should.

He had been speaking only a few minutes when there appeared on the scene another person, who was destined in the years to come to hold a place in the hearts of his countrymen second to none.

Abraham Lincoln was present, and, taking a seat near Mr. Douglas,

listened to the opening speech of his great antagonist, whose opponent he was for the office of United States Senator from Illinois, having been nominated a month previously by acclamation at Springfield by the Republican Convention. Mr. Lincoln heard the speech, and replied the next evening from the same place. Then followed a great campaign, with seven joint debates at different places in Illinois, which caused Mr. Lincoln to take first rank, as an acknowledged exponent of the slavery question (which was the issue of the day), far superior to any who had preceded him.

The excitement in Chicago during

the campaign was one of intense interest. Old and young participated in the great meetings held by their respective parties, and the whole State was aroused by the great issues of the day. Thousands assembled at every place where the joint debates were held throughout the State.

On the night before the election one of the largest torch-light parades by the Republicans ever known in the West took place in Chicago. We young men responded early on this stormy night, and that stalwart Republican of those days, John Wentworth (familiarly called "Long John," from his great height), led the

procession. Our march was over the plank roads through the streets of the city, midst mud and filth, which constituted in those days a leading element in Chicago life.

The Democrats were equally alive on the same evening. Judge Douglas addressed several meetings of large size in different parts of the city, which he held by his earnest appeals and matchless eloquence, while his audience stood without shelter in the rain.

They were glorious times in those days, and were immensely enjoyed by the younger men of that generation.

The two great political giants at

that time were comparatively young men. Although Mr. Lincoln was then called "Honest Old Abe," he was but forty-nine years of age, and Mr. Douglas, who was about to make the third successful election to the United States Senate from the great State of Illinois, was but forty-five years of age.

Thus ended the great campaign which made Stephen A. Douglas United States Senator for the third term, and Abraham Lincoln, two years later, President of the United States.

I remember seeing Mr. Lincoln at the Tremont House at the close of the campaign, on his way to

his home in Springfield, looking like a trained athlete, bronzed and rugged, as most of his speeches were made out of doors. He was a stranger to liquors and tobacco in any form. To show how economical he was in his campaign expenses, it is related of him that he said he would not be surprised if it cost him "nigh onto five hundred dollars"—and he had made during the campaign about 120 speeches! What a commentary on our modern political times!

Mr. Douglas was an adopted son who dearly loved his State and was greatly loved in return. He was often spoken of as "The Little Giant

of the West," and was Illinois' favorite son and always her defender. He died in June, 1861, honored and lamented by the whole nation.

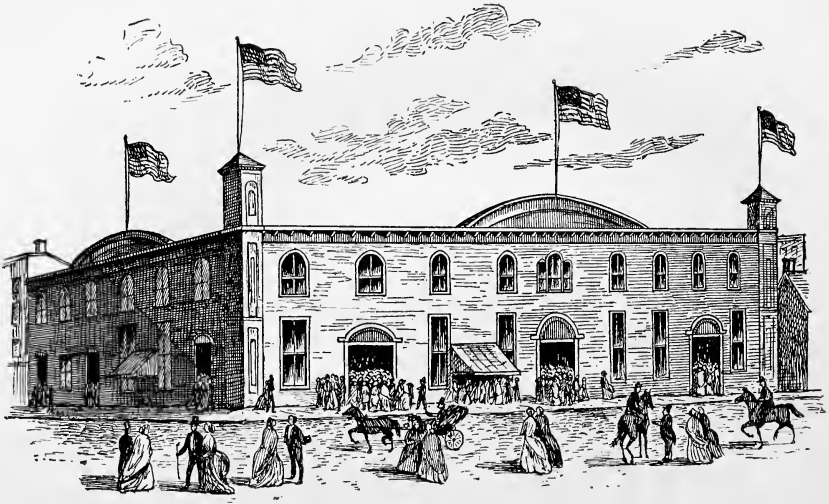
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

As we have only praise and honor for Abraham Lincoln as each anniversary of his birth occurs, I have thought it well to give the younger generation some idea of the state of affairs existing at the time of his first nomination for the presidency in Chicago, May, 1860.

I was a resident of that city from 1854 to 1861, and cast my first vote for Mr. Lincoln at the election following the memorable

campaign with Mr. Douglas in the fall of 1858 for United States Senator from Illinois. I was also present in the Republican Wigwam during the sessions of the convention which resulted in Mr. Lincoln's nomination for President of the United States.

The building where the convention was held which nominated Mr. Lincoln was a frame structure, two stories in height, with a low flat roof. It was erected by the citizens of Chicago for the express purpose of holding the Republican Convention, there being no public hall of sufficient capacity in the city. It cost about $35,000, was named the Re-



THE CHICAGO WIGWAM

WHERE THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION OF 1860 WAS HELD

publican Wigwam, and held about 10,000 people. It was situated at the corner of Lake and Market streets, fronting on Market Street Square. Its dimensions were about 200 feet on Market Street and 100 feet on Lake Street. On the main floor was a raised platform about six feet high, which extended the entire length of the building, for the seating of delegates and others connected with the convention. The audience room on this floor was without seats, and was exclusively occupied by men. The upper or gallery floor was fitted with plain board seats, and largely occupied by women.

More people congregated in the

square during the sessions of the convention than the building would accommodate. During the balloting for candidates the result as announced by States was passed up through the roof to messengers there, and repeated by them to the waiting thousands in the square and streets around the building. These reports were received in such a boisterous manner at times as to drown the proceedings of the convention within doors.

The convention met on the morning of May 16, 1860, and organized by electing Hon. George Ashmun, ex-member of Congress from Massachusetts, permanent chairman. He

proved to be a very able presiding officer.

The only States which were a unit for Mr. Lincoln's nomination were Illinois, which put him in nomination, and Indiana. When Indiana was called the Hon. Mr. Lane, chairman of the delegation and United States Senator from Indiana at that time, arose and in stentorian tones said: "Indiana seconds the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President of the United States—a man good for splitting rails and mauling Democrats."

When the final announcement of Mr. Lincoln's nomination was made, the cannons which were in the

square immediately belched forth like roaring thunder, and Bedlam was apparently let loose until the immense crowd was exhausted by the intense excitement which the nomination had produced.

Well do I remember how coldly this fell upon New York's forty-four delegates, led by their honorable chairman William M. Evarts of New York City, who were united in their support of Mr. Seward. Not a cheer came from a single delegate from that State, while the rest of the convention was in a grand tumult, wild with excitement.

Finally Mr. Evarts arose and, in one of his grand speeches, moved

the nomination of Abraham Lincoln be made unanimous, which was done. I have always been of the opinion that had the convention been held in the East, Mr. Lincoln would not have been nominated. The people of the West—not the convention—nominated Mr. Lincoln.

Among the notable incidents of that convention was the exhibition of a massive bowie knife by the Wisconsin delegation at their headquarters, having engraved on its blade the following words: "Presented to the Hon. John F. Potter, M. C. from Wisconsin, who will always keep a Pryor engagement."

The sequel was that a member of Congress from the State of Virginia (Mr. Pryor) had recently challenged the Hon. Mr. Potter to duel. Mr. Potter accepted the challenge and chose bowie knives for weapons. It created great amusement among the delegates, as the knife, with the blade open, was about six feet in length.

When I look back over forty years and remember the men of that day who were faithful and loyal to the Republican party in the State of Illinois, I can only say "God bless them!" There were John Wentworth, who stood seven feet in his stockings, and was for

several terms a member of Congress and mayor of Chicago; Isaac N. Arnold, afterward a member of Congress; Joseph Medill and William Bross, editors of the stanch Chicago *Tribune;* Richard Yates, later Governor of Illinois; Norman B. Judd, appointed under Mr. Lincoln minister to Berlin; and a host of others, most of whom have now passed away.

We can never know the full measure of their heroic labors, but we do know that their adherence and devotion to a great cause brought forth a Great Man whose name and fame will shine as long as time exists.

The following editorial, copied from a New York paper of May 19, 1860, will do much to show the feeling that existed with at least one of the great dailies prominent in the newspaper field then as well as now. This editorial was printed the day following Mr. Lincoln's nomination for the presidency, and in the light of the historical events which have occurred since the article was written, it certainly has not proved a good prediction:

"THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT.

"The Republican Convention at

Chicago have nominated Abram Lincoln of Illinois for President of the United States—a third-rate Western lawyer, poorer than even poor Pierce. This is a complete defeat of Seward, who is fairly entitled to a nomination from the party which is of his own creation. The result was brought about by the intrigues of Horace Greeley and old Blair of Silver Springs, who, though they could not obtain the nomination for Madame Bates, their first love, yet prevented the success of the apostle of the higher law, and got a man whom they can mold to their personal purposes more readily than Mr. Seward. A few years ago, at

Washington, the New York Senator gave offense to Greeley, and he has never been forgiven, though it was he who first raised the editor of the *Tribune* to importance. Mr. Seward's defeat is a heavy blow to Thurlow Weed, who built upon his nomination high hopes of preferment, which now turn out to be only castles in the air. What Raymond and Webb will do remains to be seen.

"The conduct of the Republican party, in this nomination, is a remarkable indication of small intellect growing smaller. They pass over Seward, Chase, and Banks, who are statesmen and able men, and

they take up a fourth-rate lecturer who cannot speak good grammar, and who, to raise the wind, delivers his hackneyed, illiterate compositions at two hundred dollars apiece. Our readers will recollect that this peripatetic politician visited New York two or three months ago, on his financial tour, when, in return for the most unmitigated trash, interlarded with coarse and clumsy jokes, he filled his empty pockets with dollars coined out of Republican fanaticism. If, after he becomes President of the United States, the public finances should fail, he can set out upon a lecturing mission through the country, taking Horace

Greeley along with him; he may thus replenish a collapsed treasury. If people will not exchange their loose dimes for the instruction or the pleasure derived from his eloquence, they may be induced to part with some of their cash in the cause of patriotism and to save the nation from bankruptcy—an event which is very likely to happen if the Republicans get hold of the nation's purse.

"The only thing for which Lincoln has been distinguished, besides his itinerant lecturing, is his defeat by Douglas in his own State, at a time when the ticket of the Republican party had five thousand majority

over the Democracy in Illinois. In his anti-slavery opinions he is the most ultra and revolutionary of all the candidates whose names were introduced at Chicago; and in the campaign in which he was beaten he gave utterance to the most violent sentiments, and went into the irrepressible conflict before Seward himself.

"At such a nomination the Democrats have good reason to rejoice. They have a clear road now before them, and nothing can arrest their onward march to victory, if they are only true to themselves. Their stars are luckier to them than they deserve. They have the game in their

hands, if they will suppress their insane quarrels and unite upon a single candidate, be he Douglas or Dickinson or Lane, but not Guthrie, Hunter, or Breckenridge, or any Southern man. The candidate must be a man who will run well in the Middle States, and he must be taken without any platform on his former record in regard to the South. There is no need of any platform. The Republicans have made the issue, and that must be met, not by side winds or abstractions, but by a direct negative. Their principles involve the dissolution of the Union. Their policy is to overthrow the institutions of the South, by

force or fraud, by legislation, in violation of the Constitution, or, if necessary, by fire and sword. In the face of this formidable position, to split hairs about squatter or popular sovereignty in distant Territories is like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, or the mariners in a gallant ship disputing about her measurement or what ought to be the form of her rig while the vessel fast drifts on a lee shore, to the imminent peril of all on board. If those who undertake to navigate the Democratic party will abandon from this moment their senseless jargon, and set about working the ship as practical men, they will weather the

storm and make their destined port in safety. By the discomfiture of Seward at Chicago and the nomination of such a man as Lincoln, even the State of New York, with its thirty-five votes, is lost to Republicanism, and with it the hopes that the party cherished, if the Democracy know how to take advantage of the blunder that has been made, and rally round a single banner, inscribed with these words—'United we stand, divided we fall.'"

I had the honor and pleasure of taking Mr. Lincoln by the hand at the first reception he held in Chicago after his election to the presidency.

It occurred the latter part of November, 1860, and there were present both Mrs. Lincoln and Vice President Hamlin. The latter was summoned to Chicago by Mr. Lincoln for consultation, this being the first time they had ever met in person.

What a wonderful man Mr. Lincoln was! What were the secrets of his great life? To my mind one of the foremost was—he was always guided by his conscience in his daily duties, whether it was keeping a cheap grocery store in a small town in Illinois or writing an Emancipation Proclamation as the ruler of a nation at the capital of his country.

He was traduced and maligned as

no magistrate of our country ever had been. There are men in the marts of trade and on our great exchanges at the present time shedding tears for him, who would not be pleased to see in print what they said about Abraham Lincoln and his administration in the early days of the Rebellion. We forgive, but cannot forget.

They did not know at the time they cursed him that he was to be the commander-in-chief of the largest army of modern times, and that the soldier, the widow, and the orphan could appeal to him at any time or place and receive succor from his generous heart.

They did not know that the great city of New York, which had no cheers for him on his journey to Washington to take the presidential chair, and where he was received by their mayor in a cold and almost insulting manner, would receive his body in a few years and pay homage to it the like of which was never known.

They did not know that his great heart could brook insult, endure the malignity of his fellow men, and that he could still say in his second inaugural message, "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

They did not know that he would enter his chamber and on bended

knee ask the divine guidance of a just and loving God to assist him to carry the burden put on him by a great republic.

They did not know that his funeral procession would be seventeen hundred miles in length, the route of which would be watered by the tears of a weeping nation.

They did not know that the whole civilized world would mourn his death, and that both rich and poor would show their grief in memory of him who was a friend to all humanity.

The greatest and best legacy left by Abraham Lincoln to the world is not of a political nature, but is con-

tained in his writings and messages, wherein he brought God nearer and made his power and love more visible to mankind.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." Noble Lincoln! We see thee now—thy rugged, honest face in the largest mansion of thy Heavenly Father, placed on the highest pinnacle of fame, to go down the ages for all time, honored by the people that you so greatly loved. Let us learn wisdom from thy wisdom, patience from thy patience, patriotism from thy patriotism; and hallowed be thy memory for all time.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

"*Fellow Countrymen:* At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The

progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

"On the occasion corresponding to this, four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city, seeking to destroy it with war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide the effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish; and the war came. One-eighth of the whole population

were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union by war, while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

"Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.

"Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes his aid

against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces. But let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayer of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offenses which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern there any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living

God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

"Since the days of Christ's sermon on the mount, where is the speech of emperor, king, or ruler, which can compare with this? May we not, without irreverence, say that passages of this address are worthy of that holy book which daily he read, and from which, during his long days of trial, he had drawn inspiration and guidance? Where else but from the teachings of the Son of God could he have drawn that Christian charity which pervades the last sentence, in which he so unconsciously describes his own moral nature: '*With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the*

right.' No other state paper in American annals, not even Washington's farewell address, has made so deep an impression upon the people as this."

—*From Arnold's "Life of Lincoln."*

THE END.